



MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION held Wednesday, September 18, 2002, for the purpose of meeting with representatives of WMCRP Architects regarding their interest in office space at Roosevelt Center.

Mayor Pro Tem Rodney Roberts started the meeting at 8:10 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Alan Turnbull, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Pro Tem Rodney Roberts. Councilmember Edward V. J. Putens arrived shortly after the meeting began. Mayor Judith F. Davis, who had been attending another meeting, arrived at about 8:55 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Kristen Ward, Community Planner; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk. David E. Moran, Assistant to the City Manager, arrived at about 9 p.m.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: David Whaples and Michael Poness, WMCRP; Virginia Beauchamp, the Greenbelt News Review; and Maniko Barthelemy, the Gazette.

Michael Poness, a principal with WMCRP, gave an introduction to the firm and the chronology of the location of its offices over the years, from Hyattsville to Riverdale to New Carrollton, emphasizing the firm's stability in the locations it chooses. The space it currently has at the New Carrollton Metro is more than it needs. David Whaples, Director of Design for the firm, lives in Greenbelt and became aware of the second floor space over Beijing, which would require expansion to meet the 3,300-4,000 square footage they ideally need. The Greenbelt address is attractive to them because of its historic and architectural significance; Greenbelt is accessible to their market; and it is not far from their current location, for the benefit of their current employees. Mr. Poness added that he had met with George Christacos, who was receptive to their plans. Although the addition to the structure they are proposing would not make a major change to the appearance of the Center, it would require the City's approval because of the façade easement.

Mr. Whaples and Mr. Poness showed plans for several different levels of addition.

In response to a question from Mr. White, Mr. McLaughlin said the addition would not encroach on the theater property and that he had discussed with WMCRP the possibility of a shared elevator to the second floor that would assist with projection room access as well as the proposed office space.

Mr. Putens asked about the strength of the existing roof to support the addition. Mr. Poness said Mr. Christacos believed there would be no problem but that, with the City's encouragement to continue developing their plans, their next step would be to

determine if the building was structurally adequate for the project for the project to be feasible.

Mr. Roberts asked about internal space. Mr. Poness and Mr. Whaples said they intended to knock out all internal non-bearing walls and remove the lowered ceiling.

Mr. Turnbull asked about the restrictions of the façade easement. Mr. McLaughlin said he did not think there would be a problem, since the easement allows for changes with the approval of the City. He said while the City would not wish to open the door for many requests for exceptions, he did not believe this one would be likely to be precedent-setting. He added that he thought this would be a good use of second floor office space for a long-term tenant.

Mr. Poness asked for any information the City could provide on state funding that might be available only to the owner. He estimated the costs of the renovation as ranging from \$20-\$50/SF. There was also discussion of whether the City might assist with financing any renovations. Mr. McLaughlin said staff would check into both possibilities.

Mr. Roberts expressed reservations about the blocking of the windows in the theater projection room and the appearance of the one part of the proposed addition that under plan AC@ would be over the Variety Store and closest to Crescent Road. Mr. Whaples asked Council to look at how that part of the building looks now, saying he thought the proposed change would be an improvement.

Mr. White said he did not share Mr. Roberts' concern but that Council would clearly need to see a more detailed treatment eventually. Mr. Turnbull also expressed his support, adding that it would be helpful to be able to see the Crescent Road side without the trees.

In response to a question from Mr. Turnbull, Mr. McLaughlin said there could be no issue of covenant on future use unless the City were a direct participant in the project. Mr. Roberts suggested the City check to see if the part of the addition over the theater lobby might not involve City property.

At 9:10 p.m., the architects and press left.

Other Business

Mayor Davis and Mr. Moran gave a briefing on the meeting they had attended earlier in the evening regarding changes in the mechanism and focus for Community Development Block Grant funding. The emphasis will be on economic development projects, and presumably commercial rather than residential areas. Curb and gutter and sidewalks will not be competitive unless justified for economic development purposes. Funds will also be distributed once again through a highly competitive award process. Mr. McLaughlin added that the County Council would also have final approval on awards, with proposals coming from the County Executive.

The meeting ended at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk